Battered by extreme weather, Americans are more worried about climate change

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Body

Nov 20, 2017(Skeptical Science: http://www.skepticalscience.com Delivered by Newstex) The latest climate change survey[1] from Yale and George Mason Universities is out, and it shows that Americans are still poorly-informed about the causes of global warming. Only 54% understand that it's mostly human-caused, while 33% incorrectly believe global warming is due mainly to natural factors. In fact, a new study[2] published in Nature Scientific Reports developed a real-time global warming index[3]. It shows that humans are responsible for 1°C global surface warming over the past 150 years - approximately 100% of the warming we've observed. Lead author Karsten Haustein explained their new index and study in a blog post[4].Americans are nevertheless growing increasingly concerned about climate change.

A record 22% are very worried about it (double the number in the March 2015 survey), and 63% of Americans are at least somewhat worried about climate change. That's probably because they perceive direct climate impacts - 64% of survey participants think that global warming is affecting the weather, and 33% said it's having a big influence. Global warming is intensifying extreme weatherAmericans also connecting the dots to specific extreme weather events. About 54% said that climate change worsened the extreme heat waves, wildfires, and hurricanes that pummeled the country in 2017. They're generally correct; in fact, a recent study[5] by MIT climate scientist Kerry Emanuel found that global warming made the extreme precipitation associated with Hurricane Harvey (the largest rainfall of any US hurricane on record) more likely. Previously a 1-in-100 year event for Texas and 1-in-2000 year event for Houston, Harvey's extreme precipitation has already become a 1-in-16 year event for Texas and a 1-in-325 year event for Houston - six times more likely due to human-caused global warming. Overall, 42% of those surveyed believe that Americans are being harmed by global warming right now - an increase of 10% from the response in March 2015, and a record high in the survey that began in 2008. That increase is likely due to the beating America took from extreme heat waves[6], droughts[7], wildfires[8], hurricanes[9], and floods[10] in 2017. It's difficult to deny global warming when its effects are punching us in the face. At the same time, only 15% of Americans realize that the expert consensus on human-caused global warming is over 90%[11]. That's an important result because the expert consensus is a 'gateway belief.' Research has shown that support for climate policy is linked to perceptions about scientific agreement on climate change[12].Americans are pessimistic about the future climateThe survey also found that Americans are very pessimistic about the odds that we'll successfully tackle the threats posed by global warming. While 78% realize that humans could potentially slow global warming, only 5% of Americans believe we'll be successful in doing so. A quarter of those surveyed think that we'll fail because people are unwilling to change their behavior, and 48% said it's unclear at this point whether we'll take the necessary action. Given the current state of affairs in the Trump administration[13], that pessimism is certainly justified. However, there are still reasons for hope[14], especially since the climate-denying Republican Party is beginning to lose its grip on power[15]. Click here to read the rest[16] [1]: https://www.climatechangecommunication.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Climate-Change-American-Mind-October-2017-min.pdf [2]: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-14828-5.pdf [3]: http://globalwarmingindex.org/ [4]: https://andthentheresphysics.wordpress.com/2017/11/16/a-real-time-global-warming-index/ [5]: http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/11/07/1716222114.full.pdf [6]: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/20/heatwave-south-west-us-arizona-nevada-california [7]:

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/07/flash-drought-north-dakota-montana-wildfires [8]: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/16/california-wildfire-death-toll-recovery [9]: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/sep/28/lloyds-of-london-harvey-irma-claims-maria [10]: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2017/aug/31/texas-flooding-chemical-plant-harvey-live [11]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2016/apr/13/its-settled-90100-of-climate-experts-agree-on-human-caused-global-warming [12]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/oct/02/why-the-97-climate-consensus-is-important?CMP=share_btn_tw [13]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/oct/09/trumps-plan-to-bail-out-failing-fossil-fuels-with-taxpayer-subsidies-is-perverse [14]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/oct/30/new-data-gives-hope-for-meeting-the-paris-climate-targets [15]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/nov/13/on-climate-and-global-leadership-its-america-last-until-2020 [16]: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/nov/20/battered-by-extreme-weather-americans-are-more-worried-about-climate-change

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